



Grey Knitting

And Other
Poems

By
KATHERINE
HALE

DEDICATED

to

The Women
who Knit

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Grey Knitting

■ ■

ALL through the country, in the autumn stillness,
A web of grey spreads strangely, rim to rim;
And you may hear the sound of knitting needles,
Incessant, gentle, dim.

A tiny click of little wooden needles,
Elfin amid the glanhood of war;
Whispers of women, tireless and patient,
Who weave the web afar.

Whispers of women, tireless and patient—
"Foolish, inadequate!" we hear you say;
"Grey wool on fields of hell is out of fashion,"
And yet we weave the web from day to day.

Suppose some soldier dying, gayly dying,
Under the alien skies, in his last hour,
Should listen, in death's prescience so vivid,
And hear a fairy sound bloom like a flower—

I like to think that soldiers, gayly dying
For the white Christ on fields with shame sown deep,
May hear the fairy click of women's needles,
As they fall fast asleep.

You Who Have Gayly Left Us

■ ■

You who have gayly left us youth-beshorn,
The town is sunless and the roof forlorn;
Dread stands beside the pillow every morn.

But glory is a beacon in the night,
So brilliant that it bathes the world in light,
And lures these slim lads marching out to fight.

Country of mine, so very strong and young,
What of dark banners fast before you flung?
What of the awful battles yet unsung?

No joyous road I ask for you to-day,
I dare not pipe you peace along the way
That leads to Darkness or increasing Day.

For Heaven plays the prelude: drum and fife
Merging the morning into larger life
Challenge the noon of banners and of strife;

Until, within the living crimson flame,
There seems to burn a new-born country's name,
The Friend of Light, and Honor's deathless fame.

When You Return

■ ■

WHEN you return I see the radiant street,
I hear the rushing of a thousand feet,
I see the ghosts that women come to greet.

I can feel roses, roses all the way,
The fearful gladness that no power can stay,
The joy that glows and grows in ambient ray.

Because slim lads come marching home from war?
Truly, slim lads, home from the Very Far:
From fields as distant as the farthest star.

It will be strange to hear the plaudits roll,
Back from that zone where soul is flung on soul,
Where they go out like sparks to one straight goal.

Where souls go out as fast as moments fly,
Urging their claim on the unbending sky—
Surely it must be wonderful to die!

When you return I see the radiant street,
I hear the rushing of a thousand feet—
Living and Dead with roses we shall greet.

Comrades, Awake!



COMRADES, awake! the hour for sleep is o'er;
To-day is ours, the future all before;
With steady heart and courage high,
And faith that cannot fail,
We hold as dower old England's power,
The Flag that must prevail.
Live for your Flag, O Builders of the North.
Canada, Canada, in God go forth.

From North to South proclaim the call again,
At strong sea-gates and on the fruitful plain;
As died our fathers we would die,
For Canada's dear cause,
For loyal love and God above
And honor's righteous laws.
Live for your Flag, O Builders of the North.
Canada, Canada, in God go forth.

Rise and defend the Empire's lasting fame,
O Sons of the North, in fealty as in name,
And hosts untold from alien lands
Will mingle with our own,
While hand in hand we firmly stand
For one united throne.
Live for your Flag, O Builders of the North.
Canada, Canada, in God go forth.

Live for your Flag, O Builders of the North!
Age unto age shall glorify its worth;
Of precious blood its red is dyed,
The white is honor's sign.
Through weal or ruth its blue is truth,
Its might the power divine.
Live for your Flag, O Builders of the North.
Canada, Canada, in God go forth.

In the Trenches

(CHRISTMAS, 1914)

■ ■

WAR gods have descended :
The world burns up in fire !
Warm your hands at the trench's fire,
Dear lad o' mine.

Bullets cease this Christmas night,
Only songs are heard.
If you feel a phantom step,
'Twas my heart that stirred.

If you see a dreamy light,
'Tis the Christ-Child's eyes ;
I believe He watches us,
Wonderful and wise.

Let us keep our Christmas night
In the camp-light shine ;
Warm your hands at the trench's fire—
They still hold mine.

Factory Songs

■ ■

I.

NOON

SWIFT and red are the factory flames at noon:
The world without, and work within, and a crisis soon.
The engines hum, and the men call out,
Like men in the thick of fray—
And on the hills gleam the fairy wings of another day.

But we are at it long and late,
In the glare and blood of strife,
And when sledges stop, and trade runs slow,
'Tis a fight for life.
And this is the song of the grinding wheels, through the
golden, golden noon:
"Feed us and move us faster, men—and soon, soon, soon."

■ ■

II.

EVENING

EVENING, evening, and the smoky weather,
Homeward slowly through the aisles of Spring;
Spectre-like the shadow looming over,
Cold as fate the hands that grip and cling.
*Day! on the fairy wings the hills were yours to roam;
The night has come at last, to give us time for home.*

III.

NIGHT

THE lights are lit, and now the fireside glow,
The tender faces and the love-words low.
But, God! already ringed about us here,
That other circle,—crouching, silent,—near,
Wolves in the shadowy night that stare and wait to leap;
Life, we are fairly caught, and the long, best trap seems sleep.



IV.

MORNING

MORNING! At last morning comes up the hill,
With the long, long beams of the rising sun,
And the new-born will.
And what shines out in the quickened air?
(Wolf-trampled path, you are smeared and bare.)
'Tis my good old Factory Tower
Standing the night with a stony power;—
Steel, you were made to sing!
And sing you shall to the heart of all, the endless song of
Earth,
The travail, the tempest, the battle, the wolf, and the sweaty
mirth:
“Men, I am honest work, I am fearful strife,
The day made, and the night gained, for the child and the
wife.
Life is but snatched out of life, out of faith, out of sin;
I am thought of man's heart, I am Force, I am Power—I
shall win; I shall win.”

To Peter Pan in Winter

■ ■

"And so it was arranged that Peter Pan should fly back alone to Fairyland, and that once a year Mrs. Darling would allow Wendy to go and stay with him for a whole week to do his Spring cleaning."

SPRING house-cleaning in Arcadie,
When every bough is bare:
"If it bring Wendy back to me,
I wish," quoth Pan, "'twere here."
For Peter Pan is sometimes sad
In spite of all that's sung;
He has to pipe and dance like mad
To keep this old world young.

And as he pipes the fairies light
A star for every tone.
(Do starry lights burn just as bright
When one is all alone?)
And as he pipes small elfin folk
Foregather from the moon,
And dance, and flash, and fade like smoke
While he plays on and on.

His magic tree-tops shine with ice
That us so melt in green,
The people creep like small brown mice
Down in the worlds between.
And Wendy may be well or ill,
And play or go to school;
But Pan sits high and pipes his fill
And minds no mortal rule.

O Peter Pan, the winds are cold,
The snow is deep and high;
The Never-Never Land is gold,
And yet—perhaps you sigh;
Perhaps you know, though just an elf,
In your small fairy way,
How wretched one is by himself,
When Some One Else can't stay.

So pipe your sweetest, Peter Pan,
And clang the silver bells;
Send all the elfin din you can
To where the Great One dwells,
Who holds the Spring within His hand,
That you, who wait above,
And we, in this midwinter world,
May call again—to Love.

Response

■ ■

HAVE you known pipers in a magic mood
Take a slim branch all winter-worn and bare
And breathe on it, till notes that were not there
Seemed to steal out through the enchanted wood?

Have you seen Spring, in luring, roseate guise
Gaze on some meadow, desolate and worn,
Until, like softest footsteps of the morn,
Pink buds responded to those questing eyes?

Then you have felt the stirring in my heart,
O Gazer on a life bereft and cold!
God yield to you the promise you unfold,
And let me go, awakened, yet apart.

—*Canadian Magazine.*

A Song of Success

■ ■

I SING of triumph and of gold,
I sing the inmost hopes of men;
Sing, until dead souls call again
Those early visions long grown cold.
I sing by some predestined power,
Till every heart that covets life
Awakes and cries, "God give me strife,
And give me manhood for my dower!"

I sing of sweet things left undone,
I sing of love lost by the way,
And precious small things, grave and gay,
Caught in this web of woven sun.
The early dawn notes wildly clear,
The tender treble of desire,
The sun of youth's own golden fire—
This is the undertone you hear.

For Life still knows and takes its own—
Strange Life, imperative and brave—
And urges, "While one soul's to save,
You and your song are never done!
For all the listless, leaning world
That has not fought, or swooned, or died,
Or pressed its youth into this tide,
You must sing on, with Hope unfurled."

So sing I of the Great Success,
The Capture of the soul's domain,
The failure that may not remain,
The outward flight beyond redress.
And God alone gives Song the breath
That urges it, so great, so clear,
Far out above the fields of fear,
On to Himself—through Life and Death.

—*Cassell's Magazine.*

To-Day

■ ■

I SING the Present,
The All that contains the Past,
For the thing To Be is the thing for me,
And not first cause, but last.

I sing To-day
A gold-bright cup of wine:—
To press my best with all the rest
Is the truest task of mine.

I look far out
And see dim fields of foam:—
Yet fling my hour with its sparkling power,
A wave to the dewy dome.

I feel my hour
Caught in a coming morn,
And know its strain is a moment's gain
To some day yet unborn.

The First Christmas



AS THAT Judean land which long ago
Waited through centuries to find a face
Where human and divine met first in grace
And proved high love incarnate here below :—
A little world that worshipped pomp and show,
Yet lay, as many a strange, imperial race,
Whom haunting dreams forevermore encase,
Calling a vision that the soul must know—

So through the ways I could not understand,
Through light that dawned to disappear again,
And pale mirage upon the distance cast,
I waited even as that lonely land,
And no dark night has ever been in vain,
Since heaven shines through thee to me at last.